

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

5 The invention provides methods of treating and preventing vascular diseases, by inhibiting cysteine proteases active at sites of vascular injury, particularly cathepsins K and S, by administering cystatin C or TGF- $\beta_1$ . Cystatin C is severely reduced in both atherosclerotic and aneurysmal aortic lesions. Also provided is a method of diagnosing a patient at risk of, or with, vascular injury by detecting low levels of circulating cystatin C.

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